

ស្រុកបឹង

ក្រសាន្តរាយកម្មណ៍

# ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE

Cambodian Classical & Folk Dance  
1999 COMMEMORATIVE BOOK

Louis S. Haskell

Attorney at Law

978-459-8359



# គ្រឿបរាជក៍យុទ្ធបានី ឯកសារជំនួយ

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For more information regarding the Angkor Dance Troupe,  
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<http://civic.uml.edu/angkor>

# ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE

ក្រសាគ អង្គរ



Photo: Kevin Hartkins, Londonderry, NH

## THE POWER OF ART & CULTURE: A COMMUNITY HEALS ITSELF

The Angkor Dance was formed in 1986 by two dance instructors and a handful of dancers who learned traditional Cambodian dance in refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. When we resettled in Lowell, we brought a passion to carry on our cherished traditions – to practice and perform, to teach others, and to see the art form preserved for future generations of all cultures.



Photo Courtesy Eleanor Briggs, Hancock, NH

A classical dancer performs a ceremony in front of the Angkor Wat temple complex in the Siem Reap province of Cambodia.

**The Troupe takes its name from the great Angkor Civilization, between 802 and 1432 AD, when Cambodia was a dominant empire in Southeast Asia. Dance, music, and drama have always been prominent in Khmer society, but these ancient traditions were nearly wiped out when the Khmer Rouge controlled Cambodia in the 1970's. Artists were among those deliberately targeted for execution and more than 90% of the country's tradition bearers perished. Today as Cambodians in Lowell and elsewhere struggle to emerge from decades of war and poverty, our people look to the rebirth and re-creation of dance as testimony to the endurance of Cambodian culture.<sup>1</sup>**

**The Angkor Dance Troupe plays an important role in Lowell.**

Greater Lowell is home to the second-largest community of Cambodian Americans in the country. Most residents are refugees who resettled here in the wake of the Khmer Rouge genocide. Cambodian dance performances provide a poignant reminder of the beauty and deep spirituality of Cambodian culture and help us develop a sense of home and community in our new homeland.

While working in refugee camps during the 1980's, anthropologist Toni Shapiro observed that despite adverse conditions there was a passion to dance. "People who know only the rudiments of Khmer classical or folk dance movements taught others, and they staged small shows...Wherever the Khmer were, some were dancing. In the camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, a war zone in 1983, dancers dodged artillery shells on the way to practice or even during performances. Still they danced...And thousands showed up to watch, sometimes perching on bunkers to get a better view." <sup>2</sup>



***Happy New Year***

**សីរីឆ្នាំថ្មី**

from  
**Paul Marion & Rosemary Noon**

**ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE**  
Khmer Classical & Folk Dance



### A National Leader in Traditional Cambodian Dance

The Angkor Dance Troupe is nationally recognized as one of the most accomplished and experienced Cambodian traditional arts ensembles performing today. The Troupe has appeared at numerous prestigious venues throughout the Northeast including First Night Boston, the National and Lowell Folk Festivals, the Berkshire Museum, Yale University, and the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. The Troupe has participated in workshops at Jacob's Pillow and is listed on the New England Touring Roster. During 1998 alone, the Troupe appeared in 33 performances for combined audiences of more than 13,000 people.

Troupe Artistic Director Phousita S. Huy is one of the world's most-respected master teachers of Cambodian dance. Before joining the Troupe, she was a faculty member with the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, and she toured internationally as a principal with the Classical Dance Company of Cambodia. Troupe Coordinator and Founder Tim Chan Thou was certified as a teacher of Cambodian traditional dance at the Khao-I-Dang and Philippine Refugee Centers.



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The Troupe takes a bow after a performance for Yale University in September 1998.



**C**lassical dance has been connected to the sacred rituals of Cambodia for more than one thousand years. During the great Angkor civilization, dancers performed blessing ceremonies in temples to bring prosperity to the kingdom. Once the exclusive domain of royalty, classical dance is now performed for audiences everywhere.

In classical dance, we see highly-stylized positions in concert with gentle movements. Gestures are strictly defined and distinguished by the intricacy of hand positions. Each gesture has a specific meaning, often relating to nature. For example "Lea" can denote a leaf, but it can also mean "to open." (Right hand in photo.) Depending on its context within a dance, Lea can represent the leaf and its beauty or the opening of a hand or piece of paper. "Cheep" (left hand in photo) can symbolize a flower or it can mean to fold into small pleats.

**T**hroughout Cambodia, after the harvest, it is time for music, song, and dance. Folk dance is rooted in rural Cambodia and depicts rituals of everyday village life. The dances honor skills that are typically undervalued in the rush toward westernization, such as fishing and rice farming.

Dance motifs are commonly based on local legends and inspired by themes of nature as well as the ceremonies, and customs that shape the lives of Cambodian people. Distinctive, colorful costumes represent the traditional dress and cloth worn the various regions and ethnic groups within Cambodia.

Just as court dance is ruled by a strict form and a prescribed language of movement, folk dance is spontaneous, created for emotional expressions.

## *Folk Dance*





Photo: Kevin Harkins, Londonderry, NH

### An Extensive Collection of Richly Detailed Costumes

The Angkor Dance Troupe has assembled an extensive collection of richly-detailed, authentic costumes, dance materials, and artifacts. Much of the collection was created by master dancers and costumers from the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.

Preparing for a performance can take several hours. Many costumes are so intricate and close-fitting that dancers must be sewn into them before performances.

**Best Wishes from  
Dean Janice M. Stecchi  
College of Health Professions &  
Center for Health Promotion  
University of Massachusetts Lowell  
in anticipation of continued partnerships.**



Thomas A. Golden, Jr.  
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

ជំជានលវក្រឹត

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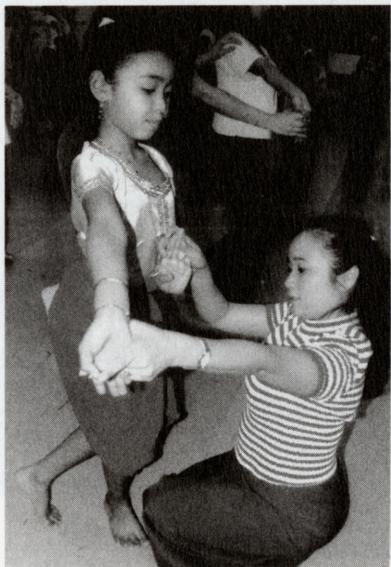
Best Wishes to the  
Greater Lowell Cambodian Community  
and Congratulations to the

ក្រុងក្រាមអគ្គិស

Angkor Dance Troupe!

## **From One Generation to the Next – Carrying on the Tradition**

Members of the Troupe rehearse for several hours each week. The method of teaching is based on the traditional model – apprentices learn by watching, imitation, and hands-on assistance from teachers.



At left, Master Phousita Huy helps apprentice Elizabeth Yim achieve the correct posture during a rehearsal in January 1998.

In May, the 8-year old made her stage debut as "Sovann Macha," a challenging classical dance role, during a performance at

Lowell's Robinson School. Right, Master Yom Peng makes adjustments to Elizabeth's headdress before she takes the stage.



### **LAST-MINUTE BACKSTAGE PREPARATIONS**

Ms. Huy gives last-minute instructions to dancers ready to perform the "Blessing Dance" at the University of Massachusetts Lowell in May.



JOHN E. LEGGAT  
COUNSELOR AT LAW

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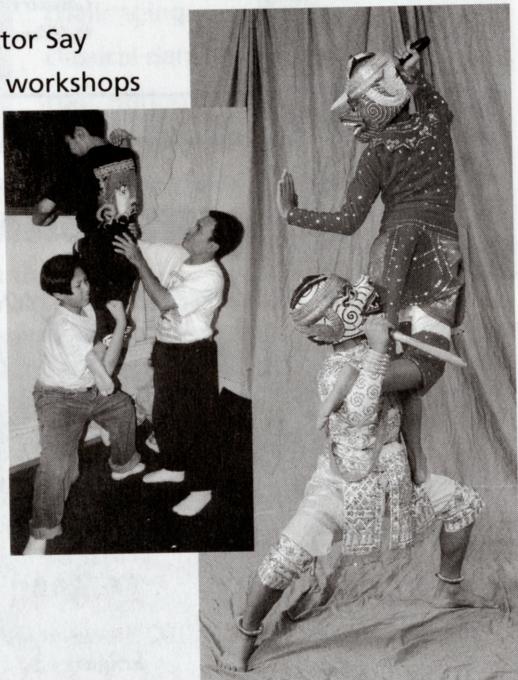
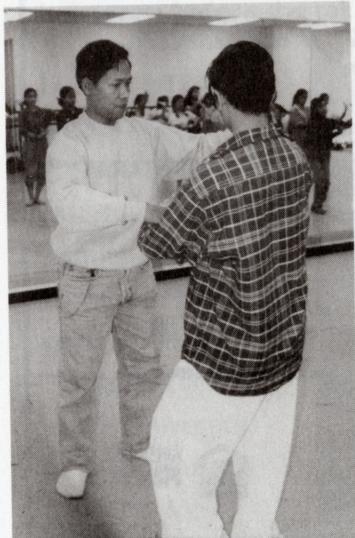


## Masters of Cambodian Dance – Learning from the Best

The Angkor Dance Troupe teaches and performs a body of work from the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, which is considered the world's cultural standard bearer for Cambodian traditional arts.

Part of what distinguishes the Angkor Dance Troupe from other Cambodian dance ensembles is our ongoing program of cultural exchange with the international community of professional dance masters. The Troupe has worked with numerous master dancers and musicians over the years, most recently hosting three dance professors from the Royal University during 1998 through a project funded by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program.

Below right, visiting instructor Say Souer held a series of small workshops to teach apprentices new scenes from the Cambodian *Reimkee*.



Left, popular University of Fine Arts Instructor Sophea Sek with Troupe apprentice Sochenda Uch.



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## Masters of Cambodian Dance – Learning from the Best

In the 12-year history of the Troupe, we have had the honor to work with a number of professional dance masters from the University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh and around the world. For their invaluable contribution to the preservation of Cambodian dance, we give them our thanks:



The Esteemed Chea Samy  
Master, Royal University



Chhieng Proeung  
Dean, Univ. of Fine Arts



Ros Kong & Tes Sam Oeun  
Masters of Classical Dance



Dr. Sam Ang Sam  
Master of Cambodian Music



Chan Moly Sam  
Master of Court Dance



Malis Keo  
Director, Univ. of Fine Arts



Sokhanarith  
Moeur (Left)  
Professor of  
Folk Dance  
& Drama

Phan Phoung  
Professor of  
Folk Dance  
(Choreographer,  
Coconut Shell  
Dance)





Savath Roeung (Center)  
Folk Dance Instructor  
with Tim Chan Thou (left)  
& Sokhoeum Sim



'Somaly Hay  
Master of Classical Dance



Phousita Serey Huy  
Master of Classical Dance



Sam On Soth  
Master of Classical  
Drama



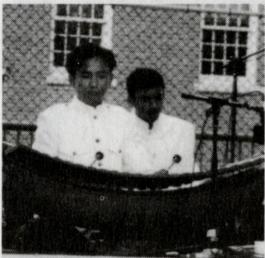
Heang Nayto  
Folk Dance Instructor



Phalla Lak Morris  
Folk Instructor



Thavro Phim  
Folk/Giant/Monkey  
Instructor



Song Heng  
Master Musician



Khatna Peou  
Master of Classical Dance  
(With Grandson Tim Chan Thou & Family)



Tath Sum  
Master Musician

Not Pictured: Rachana Khiev,  
Tonara Hing



Yom Peng  
Master of  
Classical Dance

Sophea Sek  
Folk/Giant  
Instructor

Say Soeur  
Monkey  
Instructor

## Masters of Cambodian Dance – Learning from the Best



Over the years, our active educational exchange with the Royal University of Fine Arts has helped us significantly expand our repertoire of classical and folk dance traditions.

Today, the Angkor Dance Troupe performs a number of traditional dances rarely performed by U.S.-based Troupes.

A year-long 1998 residency with Sophea Sek and Say Soeur, below, and Yom Peng, right,

helped the Troupe add a number of dances to our performance repertoire including "Tbal Kdoeung," the Rice Harvesting dance, "Moni Mekhala & Ream Eysó," the Cambodian fable of thunder and lightning, "Peacock of Pursat," the "Preap Dance," "Swva Pol," and "Peacock of Pailin."



Above, Royal University Dance Master Yom Peng assists apprentice Kuntear Eng during a Troupe rehearsal.

In 1999, Connecticut-based Master teachers Sokhanarith Meour and Phan Phoung will hold a series of workshops on the "Chihay Yam" and other dances, through a project sponsored by

the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Community Folklife Program.



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*In Memory  
Peou,*



*In spite of the past tragedies in our homeland,  
you worked successfully to restore and  
promote our treasured cultural arts,  
so they may be preserved and passed  
down to future generations.*



*I had always dreamed that  
my daughters would dance  
for you, but that time never  
seemed right. Now, they are  
able to dance, but you are gone.  
Grandma, you have been my  
inspiration and my  
source of strength.*

*- Tim Chan Thou*

(Left: Rotana & Linda Thou)

ពារេខាគម្មាយ នៃ ឧត្តមា

## of Grandma, Khatna



Nuth Kantya, Nou Bun Long  
& Family



ឱ្យដី-ឱ្យភូ-អវិថិក-អន្តោ

*Although you are no longer with us,  
we know  
your spirit is still alive,  
guiding us to  
remember our heritage.*



**Love & Respect always,**

From: daughters, Families, Grandsons, and Granddaughters

Sin Ny, Chum Chan Chhavy

Chum Koev Amra

Nuth Kantya & Nou Bun Long

Long, Amrin, Amreth, Amrith, Anrong

Lang Phann's family

Hom Hun (Gary)'s Family

Tim Chan Thou's Family

## **A UNIQUE WAY TO REACH YOUTH**

A central component of the Troupe's mission is to provide positive cultural, recreational, and educational programming for youth. We have more than 40 students, ranging in age from 4 to 18, who rehearse together every week, perform on stage, and attend Troupe outings and events. Young people typically remain involved with the Troupe for at least four or five years, many even longer. Membership in the Troupe has always been free.

**Through interaction with dozens of inner-city youth over the years, the Angkor Dance Troupe has witnessed firsthand the value of culture-based arts programming in helping young people make constructive choices in their lives.** We have had several students, for example, who were involved in gang activities when they first joined and who have since "disengaged" and are making remarkable progress in their academic and personal lives. Through their involvement in our program, young people develop a sense of discipline, self esteem, and a new-found respect for their heritage.

**In 1998, the Troupe launched Angkor Youth Dance,** a very successful afterschool and summer youth program, with major funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council YouthReach Initiative. The program is operated in conjunction with community agencies including: DSS, the ADAM project of Big Brother/Big Sister, UMass Lowell, the Lowell Police Department, Community Teamwork, and the Lowell Community Schools.



**Angkor Youth Dance  
Inaugural Performance  
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munity School: Peter Veth  
and other youth perform  
the Pestle Dance.**

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The Angkor Dance Troupe addresses a critical need in Lowell for programs that provide services to Cambodian youth who are at high risk of negative outcomes. In a culture that traditionally reveres elders for their experience and wisdom, the relationship between youth and parents has been seriously eroded by the massive cultural shift between life in rural Cambodian and life in urban America. Lowell's Cambodian-American children often serve as their parents' interpreters – of culture as well as language. Many young people feel torn between two worlds. Their elders expect them to demonstrate Cambodian values at home, while they behave as American teenagers at school. All too often, these young people seek affirmation and identity not at home or school – but through gang membership, dropping out of school, and other high-risk behaviors.

There is growing evidence that in-depth exposure to traditional culture makes a significant difference in the emotional adjustment of Lowell's Cambodian American youth. In *Fractured Identities: Cambodia's Children of War*, a book that chronicles the lives of Lowell's refugee children, authors Joan Ross and Jim Higgins write "the search for identity within a new culture has taken young people in more than one direction. The paths they have chosen seem to depend on the individual's depth of exposure to traditional Cambodian culture."<sup>3</sup>



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Our experiences with young Cambodian Americans suggest they are eager for opportunities to learn more about their heritage. When the Troupe presented a 10-week residency at the Butler Middle School in 1998, 130 students signed up – relinquishing their free period for an opportunity to learn Cambodian dance and perform for their school during Cambodian New Year.

Learning and performing Cambodian dance gives young people a chance to earn both Cambodian and American acclaim. Their parents are pleased and honored by their interest in their heritage. Our experiences have also shown that participation by students in Cambodian dance performances is held in high esteem within the youth community. It is a source of great pride for the young people involved and generates considerable respect from their peers.



**NEW CHOREOGRAPHY  
DEVELOPED DURING ANGKOR  
YOUTH DANCE PROGRAM**

Dancers in the Troupe's afterschool program experimented with new choreography during the Fall 1998 session of Angkor Youth Dance. They combined elements of the centuries-old "Monkey Dance" with acrobatic modern dance.

The resulting dance, debuted at the Rogers Community School in late 1998, has been hugely popular with audiences around the region.

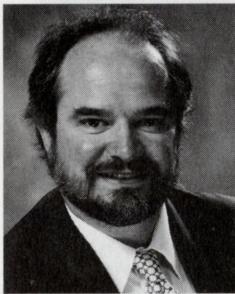


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## Highlights of the Year in Pictures



Photo: Andrew Page, Portland, Maine

During 1998, The Angkor Dance Troupe appeared in 33 performances for combined audiences of more than 13,000 people.

Above, Phalla Lak Morris and Thavro Phim perform "The Fishing Dance" at the Lowell Folk Festival.



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Steve Moses &

The Center for Health Promotion  
University of Massachusetts Lowell  
extend sincere best wishes to  
the Angkor Dance Troupe



Linda Thou and Sophea Sek perform "Peacock of Pailin" during a performance for Yale University in September 1998.

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Congratulations  
Angkor Dance Troupe, Inc.

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ក្រុមកាសំណាន



Photo: Kevin Harkins

In 1998, the Angkor Dance Troupe became one of the first U.S.-based dance ensembles to perform "Tbal Kdoeung," a folk dance about rice harvesting.

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Master performers Sokhanarith Moeur (left) and Thavro Phim take flight in the "Peacock of Pailin" at the Lowell Folk Festival, July 1998. (Andrew Page Photograph)

*Happy New Year!*

*Kristina Niccoli*

**Angkor Dance Troupe**

Thank you for sharing the beauty of your culture!

**Nina Coppens, PhD, RN**

**Director of the Baccalaureate Nursing Program  
University of Massachusetts Lowell**

*Best Wishes to the  
Cambodian Community  
from  
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Heng Noeuk (right) and Samnang Hor perform "Hanuman & Sovann Macha" for Needham Elementary School Students in January 1999.

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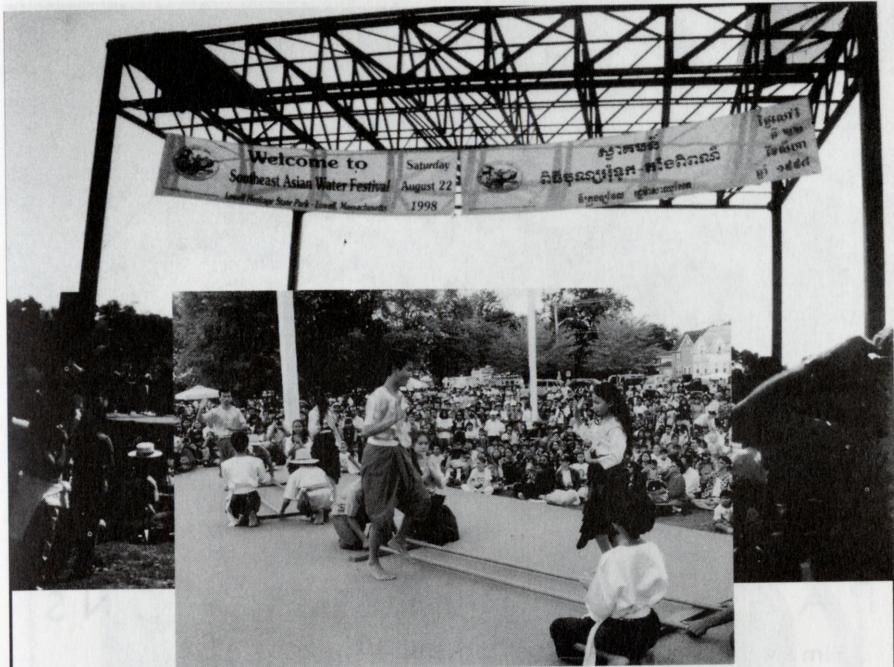


Photo: Andrew Page, Portland, Maine

Sopheap Sou (left) and Chansarim Sreng perform the "Fan Dance" at the Lowell Folk Festival, July 1998.

*Best Wishes to the  
Angkor Dance Troupe*

Donald E. Pierson  
Dean, College of Education  
University of Massachusetts Lowell



*We salute the youth of the  
Angkor Dance Troupe  
and the  
River Ambassadors Program  
for enriching the lives  
of all in our community.*

Linda Silka, Director,  
Center for Family, Work, and Community  
at UMass Lowell

Jane Benfey, Vice President  
Board of Directors, Angkor Dance Troupe



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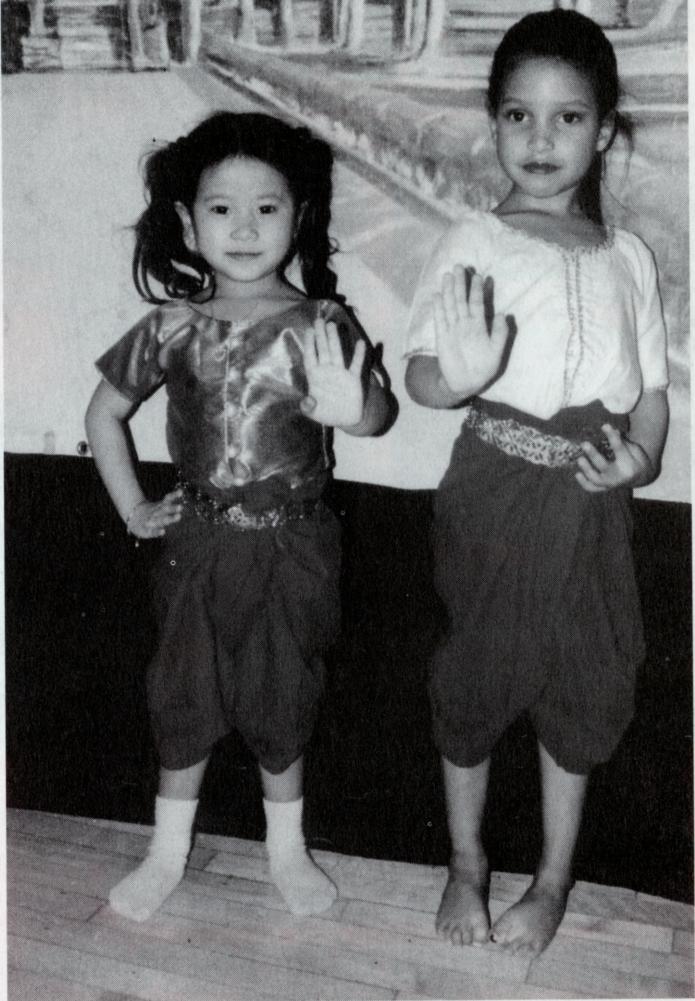
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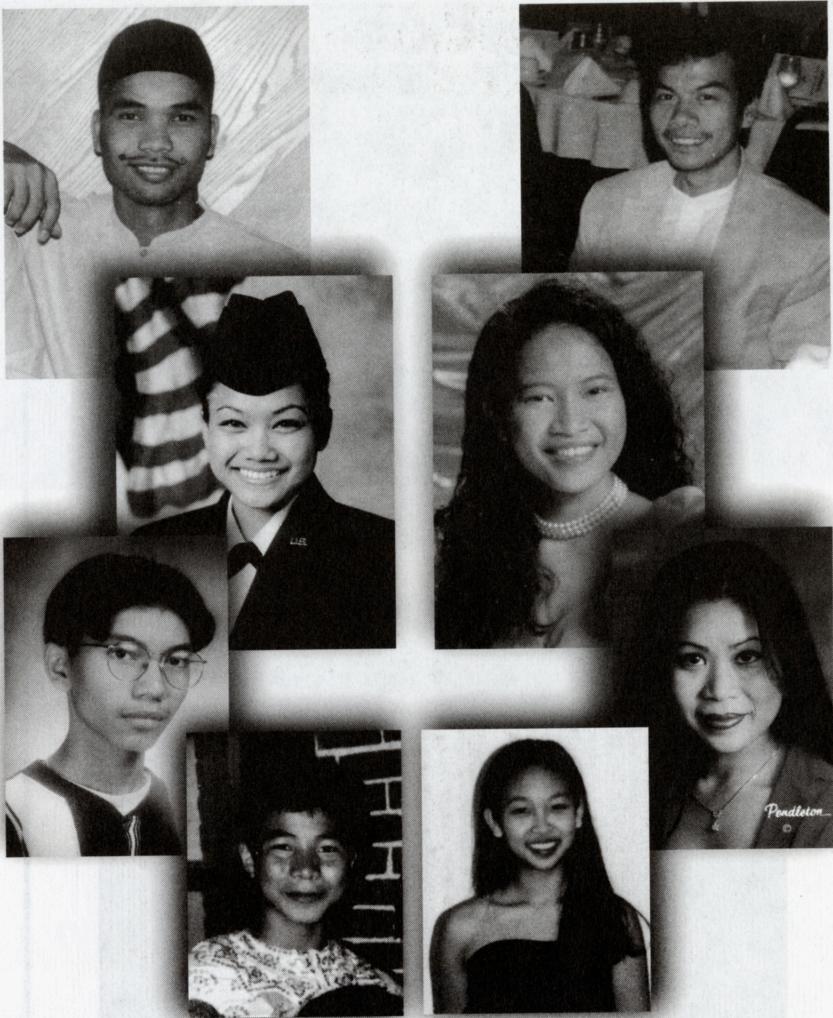
## **ANGKOR: THE NEXT GENERATION**



Two of the Troupe's Rising Young Apprentices:  
Krisna Thou and Diane Pulliam

***Bringing Cambodian  
Classical and Folk Dance to Lowell***

***Best Wishes to the Cambodian Community***  
from Jonathan A. Pulliam



## Congratulations to our Role Models!

**Pov Sath 1996**

**Khoeun Pring 1998**

**Andeth Vann 1995**

**Sopor Vann 1994**

**Rothana Yok 1998**

**Akara Im 1997**

**Samnang Hor & Sopheap Sou Thou 1999**

**Best Wishes from**

**Ann Bartholomew & Ron Micheels**

The Angkor Dance Troupe is funded in part by:



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Sources:

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<sup>2</sup> "Dance and the Spirit of Cambodia," Toni Shapiro, Ph.D. Cornell University, 1994

<sup>3</sup> fractured identities Cambodia's Children of War, James Higgins & Joan Ross, Loom Press, 1997

**For more information, please call or write: Angkor Dance Troupe**

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## **FRIENDS OF THE ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE**

**"The Friends of the Angkor Dance Troupe" is a fund-raising membership drive to support the Troupe's important work with at-risk youth. Donations to date have exceeded \$4,500!**

**Thank you  
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